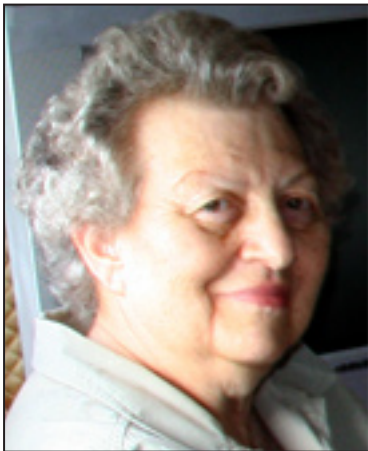


Freehold Volunteer Brings Comfort to Lonely Elderly

BY JOSEPH SHURE



Claire Weiss
Volunteer Advocate at
The Manor in Freehold

Nearly every day, Claire Weiss sees people who are all alone in the world.

So the Freehold resident tries to help tend to their needs. She makes sure their breakfast is delivered on time. She watches out for their healthcare concerns, like the time a resident misplaced her dentures and Claire helped her get the facility administrators to buy a new set for the woman.

She sees to a lot of little things — little things that make a difference in the lives of people who have no one looking out for them.

“Some of these people have no one in the world,” said Claire, who volunteers at The Manor, a long-term care facility at Freehold’s Centrastate Medical Center. “I feel I’ve been very fortunate in my life. I’ve been blessed with a lot of good things. I want to give something back.”

Claire is one of 200 participants in the Volunteer Advocate Program, overseen by the Department of the Public Advocate’s Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly, which investigates reports of abuse and neglect of people age 60 and older living in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

Acting as the eyes and ears of the Ombudsman’s office, volunteers spend several hours a week visiting long-term care facilities, making sure residents receive the best possible care. Since the program’s inception in 1993, volunteers have donated more than 50,000 hours to advocating on behalf of the state’s institutionalized elderly.

After completing 32 hours of training in communication, observation and troubleshooting skills, volunteer advocates visit nearby nursing facilities and address resident concerns on such issues as living conditions, daily activities and quality of care.

Beyond making sure residents get the medical attention they require, Claire, who worked as a real estate broker before she retired, tries to help with the emotional strain that often comes with moving to a

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long-term care facility.

It can be difficult for residents to make the transition from living in a house full of their own possessions to sharing a room that affords them only a few drawers in which to keep their belongings.

So Claire tries to comfort them.

“I listen,” she said. “I take an interest in what they have to say. I feel they want to say something. I listen respectfully. It makes them feel good.”



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